

## **Eruption** by GreenLily474

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**Summary:** For Will Byers, losing his temper was a rare thing. Feeling anger toward his best friend Mike Wheeler was a rare thing. Will hated those things happening and tried to suppress them, but things just keep building and building around his 13th and 14th birthdays as he felt increasingly isolated from his friends.

# 1. Chapter 1

Will Byers had little to no interest in celebrating his birthdays in 1984 and 1985. He had kept things that upset him to himself for months. Some of the actions of his friends upset him, but he never said anything because he didn't think it was a big deal (though as things piled up, they became a big deal) and he didn't think he had the right to be upset. *'Your friends risked everything to save you,'* Will kept reminding himself.

He was mostly bothered that they always wanted him to talk to them about things that were bothering him, even if he didn't feel like talking; but (with the exception of Mike) they wouldn't talk to him because they didn't think he could handle it. In February of 1984, Dustin found out that his father had to go on a two year overseas assignment and was naturally upset about it. Lucas found out that his favorite uncle had cancer.

"If you need to talk, I'm here for you," Will offered

"You have enough going on, don't worry about it," they each replied.

Will would just shrug and smile in response, but the fact that his friends didn't want his help or thought he couldn't handle it stung. Only Mike, who was upset over not knowing where Eleven was, confided in Will.

1984

1984 was the year that Will and all of his friends turned 13. It was a huge deal, right? First Lucas, then Dustin, and finally Mike all had huge birthday parties and received lots of presents. Will didn't mind going to those parties because it was easy to simply fade into the background. He had never particularly liked attention, especially being the center of attention.

It was March 3, 1984, day 111 that Mike was trying to contact Eleven. After the big party in the afternoon, Mike's three best friends stayed the night. They played on Mike's Atari late into the night. Mike excused himself around 11:11 pm to go outside and get some

fresh air. He took his supercom with him, but only Will noticed. A couple of minutes later, Will began to feel queasy and he excused himself.

Will hadn't coughed up any slug like creatures in months. He had no desire to start again.

He heard Mike's voice from outside of the basement door before he entered the bathroom.

*"Hey, it's me again. It's day 111. It's my 13th birthday. It's supposed to be a big deal, I guess. It doesn't feel like a big deal though. I really wish you could have been here. If you're there...if you're listening... just give me a sign...Please? Today of all days, please!"*

Will felt terrible for Mike, but a part of him genuinely believed that she was still out there. He hoped that they would find her safe and sound soon... for Mike's sake and for the fact that Will felt like he owed Eleven his life.

Nothing more than dry heaving happened as Will stood over the toilet. He felt sharp pains in his stomach and head. He leaned against the wall for a moment and closed his eyes, then went to the sink and washed his hands. That was when it happened, something that hadn't happened since shortly after New Years. The walls were covered in slime and vines and particles floated in the cold air.

"Will?" Mike called softly as he lightly knocked on the door. Will was back in his own dimension. He unlocked the bathroom door and opened it. Mike's eyes were filled with concern as he looked at his friend. "Are you okay, you look really pale?"

"I'm fine," said Will. "I just felt like I was going to puke and nothing came up."

"What's going on over there, is everything alright?" Dustin called from the couch where he and Lucas were focused on their game.

"Everything's fine," said Will. "My stomach's just bothering me a little."

"It's almost your turn," said Lucas. "Do you feel up to it?"

"We'll be over," said Mike. "Just give us a minute."

Mike stepped inside the bathroom and closed the door. Will noticed that his eyes were a little red and there were tear tracks. "What's going on, Will? You look like you just saw a ghost."

Will stared at the ground and shuffled his feet. "You should be more careful when you're trying to contact Eleven. I could hear you through the door. I don't think Dustin and Lucas heard though."

"Nice dodge," said Mike. "But thanks for the tip. Seriously, what's going on with you?"

"I-I," Will stammered. He took a deep breath. If anyone would understand, it was Mike. "I was in the Upside Down... Only for a few seconds, but it felt so real. It's crazy, I know."

Mike looked at him carefully for a moment. "This isn't the first time it's happened, is it?"

Will shook his head. His eyes filled with tears. "It's happened twice before. It's probably some weird flashback or something."

Mike pulled Will into a hug. They sat on the floor. Mike kept one arm around Will. As usual, he found himself wishing that Eleven was there. She'd know how to help Will.

"I'm sorry Mike," said Will.

"Sorry? For what?"

"It's your birthday, you shouldn't have to deal with my...issues."

"Hey," said Mike as he brushed some tears from his friend's face with his thumb. "You're here for me to deal with your issues. That's the best birthday present in the world. I just wish Eleven was here too."

"She knows you're trying to find her, Mike and it's helping, I know it."

Mike smiled sadly and pulled Will back into a hug. He knew Will believed what he was saying.

"What's going on?" asked Lucas as he and Dustin opened the bathroom door.

"Are you still trying to find Eleven, Mike?" asked Dustin. They both looked concerned. Mike froze. He didn't want to tell Lucas and Dustin about his nightly calls to Eleven as they would pester him to move on and talk about how they all saw her disappear. Will looked up and Mike and saw the petrified look on his face.

"It's me," said Will. "I-I've been having episodes... flashes to the upside down. Mike was just saying that Eleven would know what to do, that's all."

Mike looked down and Will and felt a rush of gratitude and guilt. Will didn't like people worrying and fussing over him. Telling Dustin and Lucas about his visions of the Upside Down was going to make things worse. They constantly worried about him. Mike knew that his friends only wanted to help, but sometimes pushing Will made him shut down even more.

"How long has this been going on?" asked Lucas.

"I had one at Christmas and one at New Years... and one just now," said Will. "They only last a few seconds, so it's probably just in my head."

"Jesus!" said Dustin. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"There was nothing to tell," said Will. "It's not a big deal."

"Not a big deal?" said Lucas incredulously? "You're seeing the Upside Down!"

"I know that," said Will as he fidgeted with the hem of his over sized tee shirt.

"You're not acting like you know it," said Lucas.

"Will knows his own head," said Mike. "Besides, it's our turns on the Atari. C'mon, Will, let's show these losers how it's done." Mike helped Will to his feet and they headed toward the Atari.

Over the next few weeks, Dustin and Lucas continued to worry about Will and tried to get him to talk. That didn't help his mood.

1985

Another event got the ball rolling for Will not wanting to celebrate his birthday in the most conventional way in 1985. The group found out that Eleven was alive and living at Hopper's cabin in November of 1984 when the shadow monster tried to take over Hawkins and possessed Will. Eleven often felt restless and isolated in the cabin, so a couple times a month, she was allowed to go to the Byers home if Joyce or Jonathan was home.

Eleven found herself being every bit as protective of Will as Mike was. She could see him without trying as hard as she had to with everyone else. It was a few months before Will knew this, but Mike became aware of the fact the night Eleven returned.

Eleven and Will quickly bonded over their shared trauma and unwanted psychic connection to the upside down. Eleven would often talk to Will about her time in the lab and Will would tell her about what it was like being trapped in the Upside Down, then possessed by the Mind Flayer. It felt good for Will to have someone that truly understood. It also felt good to have a friend that trusted him to understand. Will began giving Eleven his old homework so she could study and be caught up when she enrolled in school when the time came.

The party members were all starting to find things to do that didn't include the other party members. Lucas and Max were dating, so naturally, they wanted to spend time alone. Dustin had formed an unlikely friendship with Steve Harrington and was helping him with science and math so Steve could get into a good college. In turn, Steve was teaching Dustin baseball. Dustin and Lucas has decided to start playing.

This caused Mike, Will, and Eleven to form a bit of a trio. The fact that Mike and Eleven were dating and could only hang out together at Will's house started to cause tension, even though none of them wanted that to happen.

One Saturday in early January, Will took Chester out to do his business while Jonathan went into town to pick up some groceries. When Will came back inside, he overheard Mike and Eleven talking in his room.

"You don't have to be jealous of Will, Mike. He's my friend, but I don't think about him the way I think about you," said Eleven. Will froze. Mike was jealous?

"I know, El, it's just that you talk to him about things that you won't talk about to me. You two have a bond that I can't have. I don't know, it just feels unfair somehow."

Will felt a surge of anger, but hated himself for feeling it. He felt scared every time he got angry ever since the Mind Flayer had possessed him. Mike was jealous of the bond he had with Eleven? Did Mike want to get locked in a lab for years or be trapped in a dark dimension for a week. Unfair?

"Maybe we could do something, just the two of us?" said Eleven.

"How are we going to manage that?" asked Mike. " We can only see each other here. And Will's always here. Besides, he needs us, he's been through a lot. We can't just leave him alone."

Will felt hot tears sting his eyes and he furiously wiped them away. Maybe he was being unreasonable, but he felt angry and upset at the words. It was as though his friends didn't want him around. He couldn't blame them for wanting to spend time alone together, but he suddenly felt like a third wheel that they were only keeping around out of pity. That was a horrible feeling.

Will heard the front door open and he quickly stepped into the bathroom and shut the door. He splashed water on his face as he didn't want anyone to know he'd been crying. He didn't feel like dealing with their questions and concerned looks. Will sat on the floor, leaned back his head and closed his eyes. He made a decision: his friends were moving on to other things in their lives, that was fine. Stuff like that was normal. Will just had to find something that was his own thing so his friends weren't just hanging around him out of pity. He could do that. He needed to prove to them that they didn't

have to spend all their time worrying about him.

"Will? are you in there?" Mike asked as he knocked on the door.

"Yeah," Will answered casually.

"Are you okay? What are you doing in there?"

"I'm fine, and you don't want to know," Will replied dryly. He stood up quietly and looked in the mirror. His face looked fairly normal. There was a little redness around his eyes, but that could easily be explained by the cold from walking Chester. Will reached over and flushed the unused toilet, then washed his hands. He splashed a little more water on his face and dried it with the towel.

As everyone helped Jonathan put away the groceries, Mike asked about teaching Eleven one of their favorite board games. "Ready to show El how to play Battleship?" he asked Will.

"Do you guys mind playing out in in the living room, I think I'm going to lay down for a bit," said Will as he put the dog food in the pantry. "I have a headache."

"Do you want some aspirin, bud?" asked Jonathan.

"Maybe I'll take some later if it doesn't go away," said Will.

"Is everything alright?" asked Mike. "What's going on?"

Will clenched his jaw, but tried to keep his tone light. "Nothing, it's just a headache."

"Will," said Eleven. "Friends don't lie."

Will silently reminded himself that Eleven had spent most of her life in a lab that he himself hated being in even for a few hours. He tried to keep his tone even. "You're right, El, friends don't lie, but they don't accuse each other of lying either."

"I-I'm sorry," said Eleven.

"No, I'm sorry," said Will. "Look, sometimes I get headaches or just



don't feel well. It doesn't mean that I'm dying. I just wish that everyone would stop freaking out over little things. I'm not going to break."

"No, of course you won't," said Mike as he squeezed Will's shoulder. Will successfully fought the urge to slap Mike's hand away and reminded himself that it wasn't worth being angry. Mike and Eleven wanted time alone and Will was perfectly happy to give it to them. He went to his room, closed the door, crawled under the covers and drifted off to sleep.

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As it happened, the opportunity for Will to find his own thing presented itself a few days later. Mr. Clarke announced that Hawkins Middle School was starting a decathlon team to feed into the high school team the following fall. He passed around the sign up sheet. Most of Will's classmates ignored it. Will watched as Dustin and Lucas both passed it along without adding their signatures. When it crossed Mike's desk, he absently passed it to Will. He appeared to be thinking about Eleven and not really paying attention to his physical surroundings. Will glanced at each of his friends to make sure they weren't paying attention to him, then wrote his name on the paper below Tim Wilson's name.

Will felt a sense of relief as he saw Max pass the paper along without looking at it. This was the perfect opportunity to do something that was his own thing... with out his friends that he had depended on for so many years. Jennifer Hayes seemed to be one of the few students who read the signatures. She glanced over at Tim then to Will and smiled warmly before writing her own name on the paper. Her best friend Julie Mason was sitting next to her and appeared to be day dreaming when Jennifer tapped her on the shoulder, pointed to the list and handed it to her to signed. Will quickly turned around to face the blackboard as he felt a blush crawl up his face.

The girls approached Will at his locker after class.

"Hey Will," said Jennifer as Julie stood beside her.

"Hey, Jennifer, hey Julie, how's it going?"

"Good," said Jennifer. "We just wanted to tell you that we're really glad you're joining the team."

"Yeah, it should be fun," said Will. "And it's never too early to start doing things we can put on our college applications."

1984

Since finding out that Will was having occasional flashes of the Upside Down, Lucas and Dustin felt more determined than ever to get Will out of his rut. They figured that his birthday was a good time as any. A few days after Mike's birthday, everyone was hanging out at Will's house playing his Atari.

"You ready for your big birthday party, Will?" asked Dustin. "I bet Jennifer Hayes would come if you invited her. A lot of girls would probably come."

"I'm not having a party," said Will as he picked up the controller.

"What?! Why! Is it the m-" Dustin started to say, but Lucas elbowed him.

"I just don't feel like having a party," said Will.

"How could you not feel like having a party?" asked Lucas. "You're becoming a teenager."

"Maybe it's because everyone in town is always staring at me wherever I go since I got back from the Upside Down!" said Will irritably.

"What if we went somewhere out of town?" Dustin suggested. "Just the party members. There's a great arcade pizza place over in New Albany."

"I dunno, maybe," said Will as he shrugged.

"Could we do that, Mrs. Byers?" Lucas called over the kitchen.

"If that's what Will wants," said Joyce.

"I guess," said Will unenthusiastically. He mostly wanted them to shut up about the subject. "Just promise not to sing Happy Birthday."

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"Lucas and I think it would be a good idea to throw Will a surprise party," Dustin told Mike as the three of them rode their bikes home.

"He said he doesn't want a party," said Mike.

"He's having a crappy year," said Lucas. "A party is just what he needs. He's going to regret it later if he lets this go by. We can throw in your basement on the 24th so he doesn't expect it."

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"Hey, everyone, it's my friend Will's birthday," said Dustin as he stood on the table at the Pizza place. "Can you help us sing to him?"

Mike noticed the petrified look on Will's face. He thought he should stop the whole thing, but couldn't find the words.

Will felt anger and the desire to vanish into thin air as a restaurant full of strangers sang to him, but he just smiled politely and excused himself to play wack-a-mole.

Twenty minutes later, Will went into the bathroom and heard Mike crying in one of the stalls. He was about to go and talk to him when he heard Dustin and Lucas coming in and he turned on the sink to wash hands.

"Hey there, birthday boy, we've been looking all over for you!" said Lucas.

"Ready for some Dig Dug?" asked Dustin.

"Yeah, let's go right now," said Will as he dried his hands.

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"It's me again, day 130. It's Will's birthday today. I just couldn't get into it, but I don't think he could either. If you're out there, please,

please say something... give me a sign, please?"

Mike threw down the supercome and started crying in frustration into the pillow. Eleven was watching the whole time inside the void. She checked in on Will and say that he was trying to contact Mike on his supercom, but not having much luck as the signal didn't reach. Eleven focused hard to boost the signal.

"Mike?" came a faint voice through Mike's supercom.

"El? Is that you?" asked Mike eagerly.

"N-no, it's Will," Will stammered through the supercom.

"Oh, hey," said Mike. "What's up?"

"Nothing, I just heard you in the bathroom," said Will cautiously.

"Yeah, thanks for distracting Dustin and Lucas."

"Mike, I want to help."

"I'm fine!" said Mike angrily.

"Mike, I'm your friend. You always help me, let me help you."

"Let you help me? How are you going to help me, Will? You're a mess, you can't even help yourself!" Mike's eyes widened in horror at his words. He couldn't believe he'd said them. He wanted to apologize immediately, but was dumbstruck.

"You're right, Mike. Sorry to bother you." there was a click.

"Will, wait! Will? Will! Do you copy? Shit!" Mike angrily threw down his supercom. He thought about calling on the phone or taking his bike over to the Byers home, but merely started sobbing into his pillow. Will was doing the same in his bedroom.

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Will woke up the next morning feeling angry. He also had a headache. He thought about telling his mother he was sick and

skipping school, but it wasn't worth it. Feeling anger was a rare thing for Will that had become increasingly common in the past four months and he didn't like it. He felt angry that his friends had sang happy birthday the night before even though he'd asked them not to, but he decided to let it go and move on. He really just wanted his friends to stop pushing him to be happy on their terms.

Will got out of bed deciding to go to school, get through the day and forget about the night before. He asked his mother to drop him off early so he could study for any possible pop quizzes. Once there, he went to the library and did some reading until the first bell rang and he skipped his locker (as he caught a glimpse of Mike waiting there, which only rekindle his anger and sadness from the night before) and he went directly to Mr. Clarke's room.

As his friends entered the room, Will smiled stiffly at them. "Worried about another pop quiz?" Dustin.

"Something like that," said Will. Mike sat next to him and looked like he wanted to say something. Will didn't feel like hearing it and opted to stare at Mr. Clarke's periodical table instead.

Throughout the day, Mike looked like he wanted to say something to Will, but waited until after school when Will was at his locker. "Will, what I said last night, I didn't mean it."

Will merely concentrated on his books as he shoved them into his bag. "Forget about it. It doesn't matter." he answered hoarsely.

"It does matter and I'm really sorry."

"Fine, you're forgiven," said Will shortly as he stood up and pulled his back pack over his shoulder. He started to walk toward the door, but Mike grabbed his arm.

"Can we talk about this, please?" asked Mike. Will pulled his arm out of Mike's grasp and glared at him.

"Look, Mike, I get it. You didn't feel like talking last night. Right now, I don't feel like talking."

"What's going on with you two?" asked Lucas.

"Nothing," said Will hastily as he offered another stiff smile.

"We're heading to the arcade tonight. You guys in?" asked Dustin.

"I have homework," said Will.

"It's Friday and you have all weekend," said Dustin. "C'mon, it'll be fun."

"We have a campaign on Sunday," said Will. "And I just want to relax tomorrow."

"You're already ahead on everything," said Lucas. "Give yourself a break, Will."

"Maybe you guys can afford to fall behind, but I can't!" said Will angrily and he stormed out of the building.

"Maybe the surprise party isn't the best idea," said Mike sadly as he watched Will leave.

"He needs this," said Lucas. "He'll thank us later."

Mike felt like he should have put a stop to everything as Will clearly wasn't in the mood for a party, but he didn't have the energy to protest. He felt like Will's bad mood was his fault and maybe Dustin and Lucas were right.

1985

Will found himself really enjoying the decathlon team. They had meetings after school to practice and study, It was the first time Will had really gotten to know anyone outside of the Party and he liked his teammates a lot. He didn't tell the other party members that he had joined the team and they didn't notice as they were all busy with their own new activities. Occasionally, Will was over at the Wheeler's house after school until his mother got off of work, but he and Mike were mostly busy with homework and Mike's favorite topic of conversation was making plans for the next time Eleven was allowed to visit the Byers home.

Being on the decathlon team and getting to know Julie, Jennifer and

Tim was putting Will in a good mood, so he really wasn't even feeling angry at Mike for his comments in January and Mike had no idea that Will had heard them. Will did still miss his time with Mike and wanted to work on their friendship. Occasionally, he'd ask Mike if he wanted to hang out at the arcade or see a movie, but Mike would always say 'another time.' Will didn't let this upset him, at least he wasn't visibly upset until he was alone in his room at night with little else to occupy his mind.

Will did stop confiding in Eleven after he overheard the conversation with Mike. He was never short with her, he just stopped talking to her about personal things. When she came over and started displays of affection with Mike, Will would excuse himself and work on homework or drawings.

Around the middle of March, Mike really began to take notice of the fact that Will was regularly leaving the room when the three of them were at the Byers home. Eleven noticed that Will didn't seem interested in confiding in her like he had the first several weeks after her return. He'd simply say that he was fine and didn't need to talk about anything. She'd seen him alone in his room late at night crying from time to time, so she knew that he wasn't fine.

"Mike," said Eleven one afternoon as she sat with him on the couch in the Byers living room watching a movie and holding his hand. Will had gone to his room to study and was listening to a mix tape on his headphones. "I-I think Will's sad, but he won't tell me. He just says he's fine."

"He has been pretty quiet lately," said Mike as he glanced in the direction of Will's room. "Let's go talk to him, but don't ask if anything's wrong, okay?"

"Ok," said Eleven.

"Will?" Mike called tentatively as he knocked on the door with the "Keep Out" sign hanging from it. No answer. Mike pushed the door open and saw Will sitting on his bed listening to his walkman and working on some geometry homework. They approached him and Mike tapped him on the shoulder. Will looked up and pulled his headphones off as he looked from Mike to Eleven with a confused

expression on his face.

"Hey guys, is everything alright?"

"Yeah, it's fine," said Mike. "It's just..."

"Can I see your homework?" asked Eleven. "I want to learn this before I start school."

"Sure, of course," said Will with a warm smile. They spent time working on Will's homework and everything seemed alright for the rest of the afternoon. Mike still felt like he missed Will, even though they were often in the same room.

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"Mom?" Will asked as he sat down for dinner with his mother and Jonathan on St. Patrick's Day.

"Yes, sweetheart?" asked Joyce.

"Do you think we could go to Charleston State Park for my birthday on Friday, just the three of us?"

"Is that what you really want?" asked Joyce. Will had told her that he didn't want a party a few weeks earlier.

"It really is," said Will with a smile. "I could draw and Jonathan could take pictures. It would be a really nice day. And if I talk to my teachers, they can give me my homework assignments early so I can get them done before the weekend. Besides, I've got the decathlon meet on Saturday and this could really clear my head so I can do well."

"I should be able to take the time off work," said Joyce.

"It's a great idea," said Jonathan.

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On Thursday afternoon, Mike met Will at his locker after school. He had an idea.



"Hey, Will, I was thinking we could hang out, just the two of us. We haven't done that in a while."

"Yeah, sure. That'd be great," said Will.

"How about Saturday?" asked Mike.

"I can't, I'm busy," said Will.

"What? C'mon, Will," said Mike with a chuckle.

"I really have plans, Mike!"

"Will, you've been asking to hang out for a while and suddenly you don't want to?"

"I never said I don't want to, Mike," said Will through gritted teeth. "I just said I can't this Saturday because I already have plans."

"What plans could you possibly have? C'mon, it's been a while since it was just us, I feel bad."

Will slammed his locker shut and glared at Mike. "I've asked you at least half a dozen times if you want to hang out in the last couple of months and you've always been busy. That's fine, Mike. I get it. But don't expect me to suddenly drop everything just because the great Mike Wheeler suddenly wants to hang out with pathetic little old me." Will started running down the hallway and turned a corner. Mike stood there dumbfounded for a moment then took off after him.

"Will!" Mike called through the crowd. Will ducked into the nearest bathroom it was empty. He heard Mike opening the door. Will focused and his reflection disappeared before Mike entered. "Will?" Mike began checking in the stalls and hit the last one in frustration before leaving. Will became visible again. He walked to the sink and saw that his nose was bleeding. He grabbed a paper towel, ran some cold water over it and wiped his nose.

Tim Wilson entered the room and startled Will. "Hey, are you alright? How'd you end up with a bloody nose."

"I'm fine," said Will. "I just ran into a door."

"Oh, that sucks. Jennifer's mom is here. You ready?"

"Yeah, let's go," said Will. The decathlon team was meeting at Jennifer's house for one last practice before the meet in Fort Wayne that Saturday.

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When Mike got home, he tried to call the Byers house a few time, but no one answered.

The next day, Will didn't show up at school. He hadn't told any of the party members about his day trip. Mike stared at Will's empty desk. A certain memory popped into his head. He hear Mrs. Byers voice.

*Do you know what March 22 is? That's your birthday. \*Your birthday.\**

Mike nearly dropped his notebook. He had never forgotten Will's birthday. None of them had. When Mike told Dustin and Lucas after class, they both looked dumbfounded.

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When the Byers family members got home that evening, Joyce got a call from Hopper asking if Eleven could spend the day at their place the next day. Will went to bed because he had to be up really early the next morning. Jonathan had planned on working on a school project with Nancy at the Wheeler's house the next day, but offered to work on it at his own house because Joyce had taken a double shift at Melvalds. He called Nancy and suggested that she bring Mike since Eleven would be there all day.

1984

Will woke up the Saturday after his birthday in the middle of the morning. It was a nice and sunny day. He was confused as he heard his friends in the kitchen talking to his mother.

"We can let him sleep a little longer," said Dustin. "The Party isn't for another three hours."

"Are you guys sure about this?" asked Jonathan. "He said he didn't

want a party."

"He'll be glad we did this when it's all said and done," said Lucas.

Will clenched his fists. Why couldn't his friends just respect his wishes? He grabbed some clothes and got dressed. There was no way he was going to some stupid surprise party. He grabbed a piece of paper and scribbled a note: *went for a walk, don't freak out*. He threw the note on his bed, grabbed his sketchbook and crawled out of his window. He walked into the forest, found a nice tree, climbed it and sat on one of the branches.

After nearly 90 minutes, Will heard his mother and friends frantically calling his name. He covered his ears. To his astonishment, they walked right past him without seeing him sitting in the tree. When they were out of sight, Will climbed out of the tree and headed back to the house. He threw himself on the couch and began flipping through his sketchbook. It was another hour before his mother, brother and friends returned.

When Joyce saw him, she ran to the couch and pulled him into a tight hug. "We've been looking all over for you, where have you been?"

"I just went for a walk. It's a nice morning," said Will.

"Will, you can't just sneak off like that, we were worried sick," said Joyce.

"It was just a walk, mom. I've done it a million times without getting kidnapped by a demorgan. I'm not a baby," said Will.

"Hey, Will, why don't you come with us," said Dustin as he tried to change the subject. "We have something we want to show you."

"I don't feel like it," said Will. "You guys go ahead."

"You really don't want to miss this," said Lucas.

"Whatever it is, I can see it some other time," said Will. "Right now I don't feel like going."

"Look, Will, it's a surprise birthday party for you, people are waiting," said Lucas.

"A birthday party? You mean the thing I explicitly said I didn't want? I'm not going!"

"Not going?" asked Dustin. "Will, we're trying to help you. You don't understand what it was like for us when you went missing?"

"I don't understand? Really? You were here together," Will felt himself growing angrier as he spoke. "I don't understand? Well, while you guys were getting your kicks out of Jennifer Hayes crying at my funeral I WAS STILL TRAPPED IN THE UPSIDE DOWN, ALONE!" Will stood up and started heading down the hall.

"I'm sorry, Will, I didn't mean it like that," said Dustin desperately. "Just come to the party, please!"

Will turned around and glared. "No!"

Mike, Lucas and Dustin all gaped at him and exchanged nervous glances. They were eerily reminded of Eleven and the look on her face the first time they saw her use her powers. Will noticed the odd looks on their faces.

"What is it now?" he ask irritably. "What?" His three friends tried to come up with the words to explain it to him but were simply dumbfounded. "Forget it," said Will as tears started to stream down his face. "I don't care!" He spun around, ran down the hall and slammed his bedroom door shut.

"Jonathan, why don't you give the boys a ride home," said Joyce. She headed down the hall and opened Will's door. He was laying on his bed facing the wall. She sat down next to him and started rubbing circles on his back, deciding not to say anything. After a couple of minutes, Will finally looked over at his mother. She pulled him into a hug that he didn't resist and just allowed him to sob into her shoulder. She had a feeling he'd been holding it in for a long time.

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I thought this was going to just be a one shot, but it's just too long.

Should be done in two. This was briefly touched on the the MKUltra Ripple prologue, but it begged to be longer. I just decided to jump back and forth between 1984 and 1985.

## 2. Chapter 2

### Chapter Two

1985

Will was setting out his clothes for the next morning. He knew he was going to have to be up and ready early in the morning and decided it was best if he took care of as many things as possible before going to bed. There was a knock at his bedroom door and he walked over to answer it. Jonathan stood there.

"What's up?" asked Will.

"I just had one more birthday present for you, bud," said Jonathan. "This one's really special and I didn't want to take it on the trip." Jonathan reached to the side of the door frame, pulled up a large box and handed it to Will.

"What is it?" asked Will.

"Open it up and find out," said Jonathan. Will carried it over to his bed and sat it down. Jonathan followed him. Will opened the box and his jaw dropped. He picked up the acoustic guitar. There were also a few music books in the box. The guitar was clearly used, but still in excellent condition.

"Seriously?" asked Will as he ran his fingers over the strings. "How did you even manage?"

"I found it at a pawn shop and the owner allowed me to make payments. I started paying on it last summer and finished a couple days ago. You always loved playing that old toy guitar you had when you were little, I figured it was time you got a real one."

"Wow, Jonathan, just wow! This is awesome!" Will threw his arms around Jonathan's neck and his brother hugged him.

"I'm glad you like it," said Jonathan.

"I love it," said Will. He started to yawn.

"You'd better get some sleep, Bud," said Jonathan as he ruffled Will's hair. "You have a big day tomorrow."

"Yeah," said Will with a smile. "I want to help my team win that meet."

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Will's alarm clock went off at 4:30 in the morning. He briefly considered hitting snooze button, but thought better of it. Will knew for certain that he was glad that he'd be gone before Mike and Eleven got there. He knew he was being irrational, but he certainly didn't want their pity. He really hoped that his friends didn't remember his birthday.

Will got dressed and packed his backpack for the day. He headed to the living room closing his bedroom door and tapping the "Keep Out" sign on the way.

Jonathan was already up and cooking breakfast. "What are you doing up so early?" asked Will.

"What does it looks like?" asked Jonathan with a smile as he scooped some eggs onto a plate, then grabbed some toast and handed it to Will. "Eat up, it's good for brain power."

Will sat down and started eating. Jonathan joined him and Joyce came out a few minutes later to join them. She had picked up a double shift at Melvalds to make up for missing work at her new receptionist job the day before.

Mr. Wilson arrived shortly before six in the morning to pick Will up and take him as well as his teammates Tim, Julie and Jennifer to the meet in Fort Wayne. Will's mother and brother wished him luck as he left to join his decathlon friends. He was grateful that no party members had shown up at his home before he left.

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Hopper dropped Eleven off around 7:30 in the morning ask Joyce was about to leave for work

"Is Will still asleep?" asked Eleven

"He has a decathlon meet in Fort Wayne today," said Joyce. "He left almost two hours ago with his teammates."

"Decathlon?"

"The judges will ask them different questions about things they study in school," Jonathan explained. "The team that gets the most questions right wins. Didn't Will tell you he joined the team?"

Eleven shook her head.

"Oh," said Jonathan as he gave Eleven a puzzled look. He had always assumed that Will told Mike and Eleven everything. Joining the decathlon seemed like an odd thing to keep from Eleven. Maybe it just never came up. Mike must have known...

Mike arrived on his bike an hour after Eleven. Joyce had already left for work.

"Where's Will?" Mike asked Jonathan.

"I thought you were coming later with Nancy," said Jonathan.

"I didn't feel like waiting," said Mike. He pulled out a carton chocolate almond flavor ice cream. It was Will's favorite. "Mind if I put this in the freezer?"

"Go ahead," said Jonathan.

"Where's Will?" Mike repeated.

"He has a decathlon meet in Fort Wayne today," said Jonathan. "Didn't he tell you?"

"He said he had plans today," said Mike. "He joined the decathlon team?"

"You didn't know?" asked Jonathan.

Jonathan thought that it was a little odd that Will hadn't told Eleven



that he had joined the decathlon team, but it was downright strange that Mike didn't know.

Mike slowly sat down next to Eleven on the sofa. "He told me that he has plans today, I just figured..." Mike buried his face in his hands for a moment, then looked over at Jonathan. "He skipped school yesterday..."

"Yeah," said Jonathan. "He wanted to go to Charleston State Park for his birthday. He always loved that place when he was little."

Mike slumped back onto the cushion on the sofa. "Something's wrong. Something's definitely wrong. He got really angry the other day when I was skeptical about about him having plans today. He ran off and just disappeared...I couldn't find him. He's upset with me about something."

"Why would he be upset with you?" asked Jonathan.

"I don't know. I mean, he's asked if I want to hang out a few times in the past couple of months and I haven't done it. He's hasn't seemed upset about it, but Will keeps his feelings to himself a lot," said Mike. Will was the peace keeper of the party (with help from Dustin from time to time). He always tried to stop the others from fighting.

"He's sad about something," said Eleven.

"What do you mean," asked Jonathan. Eleven looked up at him. She didn't want to tell him just yet that sometimes she could see his brother without even trying. She tried to think of something to tell him.

"Will used to talk to me about things like his nightmares about the shadow monster and the Upside Down. We understand each other. He doesn't talk to me like he used to. He just says he's okay, but I can tell he's sad about something," said Eleven.

"Will always thinks he's a burden to people," said Jonathan.

"Which is ridiculous," said Mike.

"That idea is ridiculous to *us*," said Jonathan. "But not to Will. He

feels guilty about a lot of things that aren't his fault. Sometimes small things can build up. Look, He'll be home later this evening. Talk to him when he gets here."

Mike thought about Jonathan's words. Will had been through a lot with the shadow monster. He seemed to be more affected by that than his time in the Upside Down. Maybe things that wouldn't have bothered Will in the past were causing him pain.

Mike remembered snapping at Will on Halloween over him telling Dustin and Lucas that it was okay for Max to trick-or treat with the party. It was such a stupid and insignificant thing to be angry about, but Mike was angry about it. Will certainly hadn't deserved to be snapped at by Mike over it, but Mike snapped at him and left him behind anyway. Mike remembered the surprised and slightly hurt look on Will's face.

Will was aware that Mike had been trying to contact Eleven for nearly a year, so he had let Mike snap at him over stupid things without complaint. If he was lashing out over stupid things when he was missing Eleven, Mike felt that he owed it to Will to show the same patience if he was lashing out about something. Being stuck in the Upside Down then possessed by the Mind Flayer was more traumatic than missing a girl.

Mike's mind wandered to the moment he had realized that Will was missing that night. He had been seething about Max ruining the best night of the year (though she really wasn't) while they were all getting full sized candy bars at another rich person's house.

*"Where's Will?" asked Dustin.*

*Mike was suddenly snapped out of his brooding mode. Why had he just walked off and left Will alone? Then the group heard Will's frightened voice calling out to Mike.*

*"Mike? MIKE!" The group ran to the end of the driveway and saw Will staring at the sky. Something startled him and he ran behind the house and didn't seem to hear his friends calling to him. They had been standing still the whole time, but took off sprinting when Will disappeared behind the house, Mike running faster than everyone else.*

*He found Will on the ground hugging his legs desperately. He was clearly terrified of something. "Will!" said Mike desperately as he grabbed Will's shoulders. Will opened his eyes and looked around ask Mike asked him if he was hurt and Dustin, Lucas, and Max came running down the steps.*

*Mike decided that it was his responsibility to help Will. There was no reason for Dustin and Lucas to have their night cut short. He told them to keep trick or treating because he was bored anyway. He picked up Will's camera and candy bag as they headed home. The streets were crowded with trick or treaters, so Mike decided not to ask Will the details of what had happened to him.*

*They snuck in through the basement door as Mike didn't want to answer his mother's questions about why he was home early. Will seemed to be in some sort of trance as Mike led him to the sofa and sat him down.*

*"Will, are you okay? What happened back there?" asked Mike. Will just stared ahead, he didn't seem to hear Mike. "Will!" Mike gave his shoulder a gentle shake, startling his friend.*

*Will looked up at Mike as though he just realize that Mike was sitting beside him. His eyes were wide with fear. "I-I'm sorry Mike. I should have asked you before I told Dustin and Lucas it was okay for Max to trick-or-treat with us."*

*"What? No, I'm sorry. I was a jerk to you. It was stupid. I shouldn't have left you alone like that!"*

*Will looked away. He seemed slightly annoyed. "I'm not a helpless baby."*

*"Oh course you aren't, but something happened tonight, probably the same thing that happened two nights ago. You had another episode, two episodes this week, didn't you?"*

*Will looked at Mike carefully. He stared at his hands and began to fidget. "Three episodes. Three this week. I had one last night too. Dr. Owens thinks it's PTSD."*

*XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX*

*Mike frantically racked his brains to remember anything that he'd done that may have upset Will. The way he had reacted two days*

earlier, told Mike that something had been building for a while. Will had been occasionally asking Mike if he wanted to hang out and Mike was usually busy. He certainly didn't say no because he didn't \*want\* to hang out with Will, things just came up, but Mike was starting to regret not making more of an effort sooner.

Mike was also concerned that Will was no longer confiding in Eleven. Mike briefly had a feeling of jealousy that they had a shared traumatic experience that naturally made them bond, but he realized that he didn't envy either of them for what they'd been through and was annoyed with himself for feeling jealous. He made a vow to himself to accept that things were changing. He had always been the one person that Will confided in to most. It was the same with Eleven, but they suddenly had each other and that was a good thing.

Again, Will had stopped confiding in Eleven and that worried Mike. He certainly wasn't over his experience of being possessed by the Mind Flayer or even being stuck in the Upside Down for a week. Could Will be jealous of Eleven? Jealousy wasn't like Will, but Mike couldn't think of any other explanation.

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1984

Will slept in late on Sunday morning. Jonathan had already left for work by the time he got up. He walked out to the living room and saw his mother sitting on the couch with Bob.

"Hey, Sweetheart, are you feeling better?"

"Actually, I am," said Will as he looked out the window and noticed the early spring sunlight. It was beautiful and he had the urge to draw it.

"You have a D&D campaign planned today, do you want me to take you to Mike's?"

"I-I don't really feel like playing today," said Will. "It's a really nice day out, I think I just want to sit outside and relax."

"Alright, baby," said Joyce. "Do you want me to call Mike and let him

know you aren't coming?"

"That's okay, I can do it," said Will.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, I'm fine, Mom, don't worry." Will went into the kitchen, picked up the phone and dialed the Wheeler's number. He silently prayed that anyone but Mike answered. As luck would have it, it was Mrs. Wheeler who picked up.

"Hi, Mrs. Wheeler, it's Will."

"Oh, hey Will. Just a moment, I'll get Mike."

"No, that's okay," said Will. "I'm just calling to say that I can't make it for the campaign. I'm not feeling well."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Mike said you weren't feeling well yesterday. I can send him over with some home made soup," said Mrs. Wheeler.

"NO!" said Will in a near shout before correcting himself. "Sorry, no, that's ok. I just need a little peace and quiet and I'll feel a lot better. Thanks for the offer, though."

"Alright, I'll see you on Tuesday. I'll make that chicken parm you've always liked."

Will felt an uneasy sensation in the pit of his stomach. "Yeah, see you Tuesday." He hung up the phone.

Bob made Will some pancakes and bacon for breakfast, it was actually pretty good. He then took his sketchbook and went out onto the front porch. The fresh air on his face had a calming effect on him.

Will began drawing sketches of various trees, rocks and cloud formations.

"Those are impressive," said Bob as he came out onto the porch.

"Thanks," said Will.

"Mind if I sit down?" Will shook his head. They sat quietly for a few moments.

"Mr. Clarke said that you started the A.V. club," said Will.

"Yeah," said Bob. "We had to do quite a few fund raisers to buy equipment. I'm glad it's still active."

Will chatted with Bob for a while about A.V. club. It felt good to talk to someone who wasn't trying to apologize to him or push him to deal with his issues. Will liked Bob. He was the exact opposite kind of person that Lonnie was. It made Will happy that his mother was seeing someone so nice. He really wanted her to enjoy life.

Hopper came by around noon. He greeted Bob with civility and asked Will how he was doing. Then he claimed that he was there to talk to Joyce about something. In reality, Eleven had seen that Will was upset and asked Hopper to check on Will.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Mike stared glumly at Will's empty seat as he, Dustin and Lucas sat in front of an untouched board. It wasn't the same without their cleric.

"We shouldn't have pushed him," said Mike.

"He'll be alright," said Lucas. "We just need to get him out of this slump he's in."

"He must be really upset if he didn't come today. He loves these campaigns," said Dustin. "Maybe we should go over there."

"He probably doesn't want to see us right now," said Mike. "We should let him cool off for today."

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Will spent Sunday evening finishing up his social studies diorama. It wasn't actually due for another week, but Will had gotten into the habit of finishing assignments ahead of time just in case something came up that caused him to miss school. He knew that he would need

a scholarship if he had any hope of going to college. College may have been just over five years away, but it was never too early to develop good habits.

By the time he went to bed, he felt considerably better. Will felt that as long as his friends stopped pushing him to do things he didn't want to do because they were trying to "help" him, he was no longer angry with them. They would most likely want to talk to him about everything in the morning and he planned on telling them as much.

Joyce dropped Will off at school before heading into work on Monday morning. His friends were waiting for him by the entrance. Will took a few calming breaths. They were his friends, he didn't need to be nervous. Mike approached him first. He seemed to be every bit as nervous as Will was.

"Can we talk?" asked Mike.

"Yeah, sure," said Will. They walked to the A.V. room. Will wanted to stop at his locker to drop his things off, but he wanted to get the whole thing done with once and for all. He just wanted to move on from the events of the past week.

"I'm sorry about that whole blow up on Saturday," said Will as he set his things on the table. "I just really didn't feel like having a party."

"It's okay, Will," said Mike. "No need to apol-"

"What's going on with you, Will?" asked Lucas.

"I just didn't want a stupid party," said Will.

"And you didn't want to go to the arcade with us Friday, then you skipped out on the campaign yesterday. That's not normal, Will. We're worried," said Dustin.

"I just wasn't in the mood for you guys to nag me to feel how you think I should feel," Will blurted out angrily. He grabbed his backpack and diorama then headed toward the door.

"You're not walking out on this," said Lucas as he grabbed one of Will's arms while Dustin grabbed the other.

"Let me go!" said Will.

"No," said Lucas. "This has gone on long enough. We're going to talk about what's going on with you."

"C'mon, guys, let him go," said Mike.

"This is only going to get worse if we don't deal with his issues," said Lucas.

"I don't want to talk and deal with my issues right now," said Will. "Now let me go!" Will pulled as hard as he could and slipped from Dustin and Lucas' grasp. Unfortunately he fell to the ground and hit it hard. His diorama slipped from his hands and all of the pieces came unglued. "Dammit!" said Will. He scrambled to pick up the pieces and his three friends rushed to help him.

"Shit, Will, are you alright?" asked Dustin.

"Don't," Will hissed. They all gaped at him, stunned at the anger in his voice. "Don't touch it, don't touch me and don't try to help me."

"Will, we're sorry," said Lucas.

"Stop trying to push me to talk and you won't have to be sorry," said Will as he put the pieces into the box. He got up to leave.

"Will, wait!" said Dustin.

"And don't follow me," said Will. He slammed the door behind him.

"What do we do now?" asked Lucas hopelessly.

"Let's just give him space," said Mike sadly.

Will refused to look at his friends during Mr. Clarke's class. At the end of the class he stayed back to talk to Mr. Clarke.

"Mr. Clarke, can I ask for a favor?"

"Sure, Will, what is it?" asked Mr. Clarke.

"I broke my diorama project this morning. Is there a quiet place I can



work on it at lunch?"

"That's not due for another week, is it?"

"It's not, but I want to finish it early," said Will.

"I could give you the keys to the A.V. room," said Mr. Clarke.

"Other people might want to use that room," said Will.

"There's the microfiche archive room by the library."

"Perfect!"

Will spent the morning refusing to look at his friends. He didn't want to be angry at them, but was sick of them constantly badgering him to talk are trying to force him to cheer up. All he wanted was for them to stop trying to force him to do things he didn't want to do or feel when they thought he should be feeling.

When it was time for lunch, Will checked the halls carefully before grabbing his supplies and lunch bag from his locker. He continued to look around to make sure none of his friends could see where he was heading toward the microfiche storage room.

He was only alone for a few seconds. Will heard what sounded like at least two people entering the room behind him him and tensed up.

"Will?" said Jennifer Hayes. Will slowly turned around. He saw Jennifer standing there with Julie Mason. Relief flooded his entire body.

"Hey, what's up?"

"We were just about to ask you that. Mike said you were sick on Saturday and now you're in here for lunch?" said Jennifer. Will glanced from her to Julie.

"I'm just fixing my diorama for Gursky's class. I broke it this morning... And I wasn't sick on Saturday, so don't worry about that."

"You weren't sick?" asked Julie.

"No, I wasn't. I just didn't feel like going to a stupid birthday party after I specifically told my friends I didn't want one."

"You told them you didn't want one?" asked Julie.

"I did," said Will. "But they've been treating me like a helpless baby ever since I came back from the Ups- ever since I went missing." Will wasn't sure why he was talking to Jennifer and Julie so much about everything. They'd always been nice enough to him. It felt good to talk to people about what was bothering him. They appeared to be listening to him without thinking he was disturbed. "Anyway, they were pestering me again this morning and I just needed some space."

"Sorry about that," said Julie. "If we'd known, we wouldn't have gone."

"No, I'm sorry," said Will as he sat down and began taking out his supplies to fix his diorama. "You had to waste your Saturday."

"Mind if we join you for lunch?" asked Jennifer. "We could actually use a little peace and quiet too. And maybe Julie could help you fix your diorama. She's good at that kind of stuff."

Will stared at the pencil in his hand for a moment, then looked up at the girls. "Um, alright."

Jennifer and Julie each took a seat. The three of them talked about a variety of topics as they ate their lunches and fixed Will's project.

"Wanna meet here again for lunch tomorrow?" asked Jennifer when the warning bell rang and they started gathering their things. "If you still need a break from your friends, that is."

"Yeah, maybe," said Will.

He managed to avoid his friends for the rest of the day. Mike had told Dustin and Lucas to give Will some space. He felt like Will's sour mood was mostly his fault. He figured that he could make things right with Will if he could talk to him alone when Will came to his house Tuesday after school.

Will spent most Tuesday avoiding his friends at school. Jonathan had

been making a very accurate statement when He told Hopper than Will was good at hiding. He had lunch with Jennifer and Julie again in the microfiche room.

Tuesday afternoon, he was going to the Wheelers' house because his mother and brother had to work late. It was the first time in his life that Will wasn't looking forward to going to Mike's. Mike met him at his locker and Will silently put his books into his backpack. The newspaper clipping of Will's return fell out of the locker. Someone had drawn over Will's face and wrote the word "freak" across it. Will froze for a moment. Mike gaped. Will angrily slammed his locker door and headed toward the school entrance. Mike ran after him.

"Will wait!"

"Jonathan's probably here. I don't want to make him later for work."

"Will, this has gone on long enough. You have to talk about what's bothering you."

"Why should I, Mike? No one ever talks to me when something's bothering them!"

Mike stopped for a brief moment, but ran to catch up with Will again. He knew at that moment that his snapping at Will five days earlier when Will was trying to help them had been the lightning rod. They were mostly silent as Jonathan drove them to Mike's house. When they got there, Mike suggested that go to the basement door. He knew that Will wasn't in the mood for his mother cheerfully asking them how their day was.

Mike went upstairs to grab some drinks and tell his mother that they were home. When he got back downstairs, Will was leaning against the wall, listening to his walkman and working on his Algebra. Mike decided to leave him alone until he finished that assignment. Mike pulled out his book to work on his own.

Mike finished his algebra in 45 minutes. He looked over to see Will already nearly finished with the assignment from Mr. Clarke. He really would remain silent until Jonathan came to pick him up if Mike let him. Will was getting very good at being stubborn. Mike

took a deep breath, walked over to Will, knelt down beside him and put his hand on Will's arm. Will pulled away. Mike signed and pulled off Will's head phone.

"Hey!" Will protested angrily. He grabbed the headset back from Mike, but Mike grabbed his wrist. "Let me go, Mike!" Will hissed.

"No, we're going to talk!"

"Stop trying to make me talk when you won't even talk to me!"

"Look, what I say last week, I didn't mean it,"

Will scoffed. "Yeah, Mike; yeah you did."

"Ok, you're right. I did mean it. But only for second. I wanted to take it back right after I said it. I don't mean it anymore. I should have done a lot of things like stopping the others from singing happy birthday when you said you didn't want that. I shouldn't have tried to make you go to a surprise party when you told us you didn't want that. I should have done a lot of things, but I've been to wrapped up in my own crap. Crap, by the way, that you were just trying to help me deal with."

Will looked for a moment like he'd been getting ready for an angry retort. He just sighed, shook his head and wiped tears that streamed down his face. Mike put his hand on Will's should and Will didn't shrink away.

"I'm sorry I've been such and unreasonable jerk for the past few days."

"Hey, we've all been unreasonable jerks at some point and you've always put up with it. You're way over due to have your turn."

Mike pulled Will into a hug and Will leaned in to it.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

1985

"What year did John Glenn orbit the earth?" asked the moderator.

Will slammed his hand on his buzzer. It was the final question of the lightning round. His mind went blank and for a horrible moment that felt like hours, he could even remember the question. Then he suddenly blurted out "1962!"

"Correct!" said the moderator. "Hawkins wins the meet!"

Will leaned on the table took a few deep breaths. His nerves were raw and he thought he was going to vomit. He felt his teammates patting him on the back.

Each of the team members was given a medal and there was a trophy that would go in the trophy case at Hawkins Middle.

Mr. Wilson treated the team to the Hard Rock cafe in Indianapolis on the way back.

"Um, I picked this up for you last week," said Julie as she handed Will a small box while Tim and Jennifer were talking. "I thought it could bring you a little luck once in a while."

"You didn't have to... I um... Thanks." Will blushed as he took the box. He opened it and there was a small medallion (the size of a large coin) in the box with the image of Boccob on it.

"Wow," said Will. "How'd you find this?"

"My mom took me to a flea market last week. I saw this and thought of you." Julie started to blush as well.

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Will was dropped off back at his house around 6:30. He saw Mike's bike on his porch and figured that Eleven was likely still there as well. He briefly considered hiding in the woods until they left, but decided against it. He'd been having a great day, he could put on a happy face.

Mike and Eleven were sitting on the sofa as Will entered the house. They turned to face him as Jonathan came out of his room followed by Nancy.

"Hey, Bud, how'd the meet go?" asked Jonathan.

"We won," said Will.

"Looks like all that studying you did paid off," said Jonathan. "Are you hungry? I can make you some dinner."

"That's okay," said Will. "We got something to eat on the way back. I'm just tired, it's been a long day. I'm going to lay down for a bit."

"No problem, let me know if you need anything," said Jonathan.

"Will went to his room without a word to Mike or Eleven. He closed the door, tossed his back pack to the side and flopped down on his bed. He pulled the coin Julie had given him out of his pocket and rolled it over his fingers. He nearly dropped the coin and a knock on his door startled him.

"Will?" Mike called. "Can we come in?"

"I'm changing," Will called irritably. "Give me a minute," he added as an afterthought. He didn't want to hold onto his anger, but it seemed to cling to him. He got up and changed into an old tee shirt and jeans then unlatched his door before sitting back on his bed. Mike and Eleven entered cautiously then perched gingerly on the edge of Will's bed.

"Hey, I picked up some chocolate almond ice cream," said Mike. "Want some?"

Will rolled his eyes. "No thanks, I'm full. You go have some."

"I got it for you," said Mike.

"Then you have my permission to eat it," Will answered shortly.

Mike decided to try something else.

"I'm sorry about Thursday," said Mike. "I just have foot in the mouth issues sometimes."

"Don't worry about it, it doesn't matter," said Will as he rolled his

coin over his fingers again.

"What's that?" asked Mike as he pointed at the coin. Will closed his hand around it and stuffed it back in his pocket.

"Nothing, just a gift."

"Look, I'm really sorry I forgot about your birthday," said Mike. Will stared out the window. The sun was setting and there were some cool patterns in the sky.

"Don't worry about it," said Will. "It doesn't matter."

"Yes, it does," Mike insisted.

"Do you really think I want any of the party member remembering my birthday after last year?" Will asked angrily.

"What's going on with you?" asked Mike as he decided to stop beating around the bush.

"Nothing, I'm fine," said Will.

"No you're not," said Mike. "You haven't even told us you joined the decathlon team."

"So?" said Will. "It's not like any of you have noticed anything different anyway!"

"We've noticed," said Mike. "It's just-"

"It's just that you're all moving on with your own things."

"Moving on?"

"Yes, Mike, moving on. You've got El, Lucas has Max and Dustin's been helping Steve Harrington with his science homework. You know what? That's fine. The decathlon team is just *my* own thing."

"Look, we didn't mean to make you feel left out," said Mike.

"I don't feel left out," said Will. "I just don't want my friends to only hang out with me out of pity. That just-sucks!"

"What?" asked an astonished Mike. "Will, why would you even think that?"

"Because you said it, Mike!" said Will angrily.

"What are you talking about?"

"You said it yourself the other day, Mike! You *felt* bad."

"I know I said that. And I do feel bad, but I want to hang out with you because you're my best friend and you mean the world to me."

Will looked, for a brief moment, as though Mike's words were getting through to him. He then sadly shook his head and swung his legs over the side of his bed to face away from Mike and Eleven. "It' not even the first time you've said it, Mike. It's just the first time you realized I could hear you."

"Will-" Mike was at a loss for words. He leaned over and put his hand on Will's should, but Will pushed it away.

"Look, I'm really sorry that my home is the only place that you two can spend time together. If you want to be alone, I don't mind," said Will. Mike suddenly remembered a conversation from two months earlier. He realized that it was the moment Will became more distant..

"The day we were going to teach El Battleship...you heard me talking about wanting to be alone with her," said Mike. Will shrugged and continued to look away from them. "Why didn't you say anything."

"There was no point," said Will. "You just would have felt bad. I didn't care that you wanted to spend time alone. I just didn't want you to try to make things right out of pity. You know what? You don't have to. I have my own thing now and I've made new friends outside of the party. I'm having fun. So none of you have to hang out of me because you feel bad. I'm not lonely and I don't feel left out.

"But you're sad, Will," said Eleven ask she spoke for the first time since she and Mike had entered the room.

"No, El, I'm not."



"You don't talk to me about the Mind Flayer or the Upside Down anymore," said Eleven.

"Well, you're my friend, not my therapist."

"And friends don't lie, Will. You're not talking to me anymore because you're sad. I know because I've seen it."

"What do you mean you've seen it?" asked Will with a quick glance before looking back at the window again.

"I-I can see you-without trying." said Eleven. Will froze.

"Will?" said Mike tentatively.

Will stood up and turned around to face them. His eyes were filled with pain and betrayal. "So you spy on me?"

"No!," said Eleven hastily. "I check on you sometimes to make sure you're ok. I-I've been able to see you for a long time. I've had now memories of you when you're in danger since the day you broke your finger. I didn't know who you were, but I saw when the demogorgan took you to the Upside Down, then I saw your picture in Mike's room."

Will took a couple steps backward.

"Will," said Mike.

"Did you know about this, Mike?"

"Yes," said Mike.

"How long have you known?"

Mike nervously fidgeted on the string of his sweatshirt. "Since the night she came back and your mom got the Mind Flayer out of you."

"Did you find out before or after you promised to be honest and say things to my face instead behind my back?"

"It was before," said Mike. "But it wasn't my secret to tell and you'd

been through a lot. El just wanted to wait for the right time to tell you, that's all."

"For the record," said Will "I probably would have been a little freaked out at first, but I would have gotten over it. But you two have been keeping this from me for months and...spying on me."

"It wasn't like that," said Mike. He stood up, walked over to Will and trying to pull him into a hug, but Will angrily shoved him away.

"I TRUSTED YOU!" Will shouted. "I TRUSTED BOTH OF YOU!"

"Will, please, listen to me," said Mike.

The noised from the shouting reached Nancy and Jonathan who were working on a project in Jonathan's room.

"What the-" said Jonathan as he got up to investigate.

"Wait," said Nancy as she grabbed his wrist. "They're having a fight. We need to let them work it out."

"It sounds like it's getting serious," said Jonathan.

"That makes it even more important that we let them work this out," said Nancy. "Let's put on some music."

In his room, Will abruptly turned around to open his window and get away from Mike and Eleven. It didn't budge and Will looked back to see that Eleven's nose was bleeding.

"Stop it, El! Let me go!" Will tried to pull on the window again, but it was futile. He fell to his knees and started sobbing.

Mike considered leaving him alone and letting him cool off, but decided against it. They'd been drifted apart for a few months. Mike had heard that friends sometimes drifted apart as they got older, but he didn't want that to happen with Will. His friendship with Will meant too much to him. *Will* meant too much to him.

Their friendship had always been something that had some very easy, but things were changing. All it meant though was that they were

going to have to work at it a lot harder. It was a small price to pay to keep Will in his life.

Will sat down on the floor. He shook his head as though reacting to something someone was saying. Mike felt confused. Was Will remembering something that had happened in the past? Will then turned around and leaned against the wall. He looked at Eleven. His expression looked like he was reacting to something she was saying, but they were both silent.

"How can you think that, Mike?" asked Will. "It's not like that, it never was."

"Think what?" asked Mike. "What are you talking about?"

"Haven't you been listening?" asked Will.

"Listening to what?" asked Mike.

"Will," said Eleven. "We haven't been talking out loud."

"What?" asked Mike and Will at the same time.

"I've found lots of people in my mind," said Eleven. "Will was the only one who ever answered back. I wasn't sure until just now, but Will can talk to me in my head."

Mike felt a little uncomfortable at first, but decided it was stupid. Eleven had a special bond with Will that was different from the bond she had with him. That was good though. The bonds that Mike had with Will and Eleven were different types of bonds, but equally important to him. Will looked up at Mike nervously as though he feared this new information would make things weird between them. Mike felt relief. If Will was worried, it meant that he still cared.

Mike knelt beside Will and pulled him into a hug. He didn't violently shove Mike away this time. Eleven soon joined in on the hug. "We're going to be okay," said Mike. "We'll have to work harder on our friendship, but it's worth it."

"Yes," said Will. "It is."

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AN: this story came into my mind as a reaction to some of the Mike-Will-Eleven jealousy fics and the fic where Mike is a jerk to Will because he's jealous or upset about Eleven. I don't like those and we never see them work things out.